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September 2012

TO: Interested Individuals

FROM: Cynthia Burke Ph.D., Director, Criminal Justice Research Division

SUBJECT: San Diego Violent Crime Victims and Suspects in 2011

SANDAG has released its most recent bulletin in a series regarding crime in the region during 2011. This publication, *San Diego Crime Victims and Suspects in 2011*, presents information regarding the characteristics of crime victims and suspects (including gender, age, and ethnic background), compared to the population in 2011. The bulletin is available at www.sandag.org/cj. If you would like assistance accessing the report on-line, please contact Liz Doroski at (619) 699-6921 or Liz.Doroski@sandag.org.

As described in the bulletin, younger adults, males, and Blacks were overrepresented as violent crime victims compared to their overall representation in the population. Of the 82 homicides that occurred in 2011, domestic violence was responsible for the largest percentage (31%) for which motive was known, followed by arguments (25%) and gang activity (18%). Females were more likely to be victims of homicide as a result of domestic violence (95%), while males represented all (100%) homicide victims stemming from an argument, gang activity, or a robbery. Firearms were used in more than half (56%) of all homicides.

We welcome your comments about how you have used these data and ideas on how we might make this bulletin more useful. We invite you to visit our Web site and review our numerous reports and projects pertaining to public safety. Thank you for your interest in our products.

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San Diego Violent Crime Victims and Suspects in 2011

September 2012

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SAN DIEGO VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS AND SUSPECTS IN 2011

INTRODUCTION

This SANDAG CJ bulletin, one of three in a series presenting 2011 annual crime information, uses crime and arrest report data from local law enforcement agencies to describe characteristics of violent crime victims and suspects. Analyses are presented regarding which population subgroups were more likely to report being victimized in 2011, as well as how victims and suspects differed by crime type in terms of their ethnicity, age, and gender.

The content of this bulletin focuses exclusively on Part I violent crimes.¹ When reporting property crimes overall, there is inconsistency in who is listed as the victim, which makes it difficult to accurately document victim characteristics. As such, only data on victims and suspects of Part I violent crimes are presented. This bulletin is produced biennially since there has been little change historically in violent crime victim characteristics (with the exception of homicide victims and motives). However, comparisons of homicide motive are shown for 2008 through 2011.

This victim and suspect information is provided nearly one year before these data are released nationally and therefore, are more timely and useful to anyone interested in better understanding individuals affected by violent crime in our region. In addition, this information is used to develop and monitor targeted prevention and intervention strategies.

KEY FINDINGS

- In 2011, 31 percent of all homicides were attributed to domestic violence, up from 18 percent in 2010.
- Females were more likely to be victims of homicide as a result of domestic violence (95%), while males represented all (100%) homicide victims precipitated by an argument, gang activity, or robbery.
- Blacks were overrepresented as victims of all four violent crimes (21% for homicide, 11% for rape, 12% for robbery, and 15% for aggravated assault) in comparison to their representation in the population (5%).
- A firearm was used in over half (56%) of all homicides, but 91 percent of gang-related homicides involved a firearm.
- Around one in five (21%) rape victims was under the age of 18.
- Youth were more likely to be suspects in robberies (25%), compared to aggravated assaults (10%), rapes (8%), and homicides (8%).
- Overall, females comprised 39 percent of violent crime victims but only 25 percent of suspects.

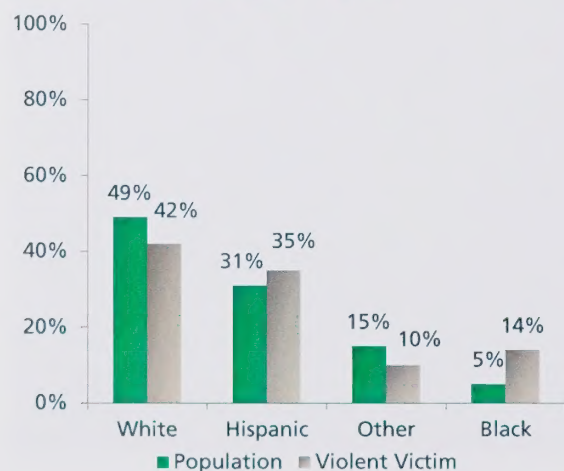
¹ Part I violent crime includes homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO REPORT BEING A VIOLENT CRIME VICTIM?

Race/Ethnicity

In 2011, half (49%) of the San Diego region's population was non-Hispanic White, around one-third (31%) Hispanic, 15 percent "other" ethnicities, and 5 percent non-Hispanic Black (Figure 1). As in prior years, these proportions differed from the ethnicity of violent crime victims. Specifically, Blacks were nearly three times as likely to be a victim of a violent crime compared to their representation in the population (14% versus 5%) and the proportion of Hispanic victims (35%) was slightly higher than their representation in the population (31%). Conversely, Whites were underrepresented (42% versus 49%) as violent crime victims, as were individuals of "other" ethnicities (10% versus 15%).

Figure 1
BLACKS AND HISPANICS
OVERREPRESENTED AS VICTIMS OF
VIOLENT CRIME



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Automated Regional Justice Information System, 2011; San Diego County Sheriff and cities law enforcement agencies, 2011; SANDAG, 2011.

A closer examination of victim ethnicity revealed differences in type of violent crime victimization (Table 1). Blacks were overrepresented as victims of all violent crimes compared to their representation in the population (5%), and specifically, they were four times more likely to be a victim of homicide (21%). Whites were underrepresented in all violent crime categories, with the exception of rape (53%), in comparison to their representation in the population (49%). Individuals of "other" ethnicities were underrepresented as victims of all violent crime (10%) (not shown) compared to their representation in the population (15%).

Table 1
TYPE OF VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMIZATION
VARIED BY ETHNICITY

	Homicide	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault
White	40%	53%	37%	43%
Hispanic	27%	30%	39%	33%
Other	12%	6%	13%	9%
Black	21%	11%	12%	15%

NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Automated Regional Justice Information System, 2011; San Diego County Sheriff and cities law enforcement agencies, 2011.

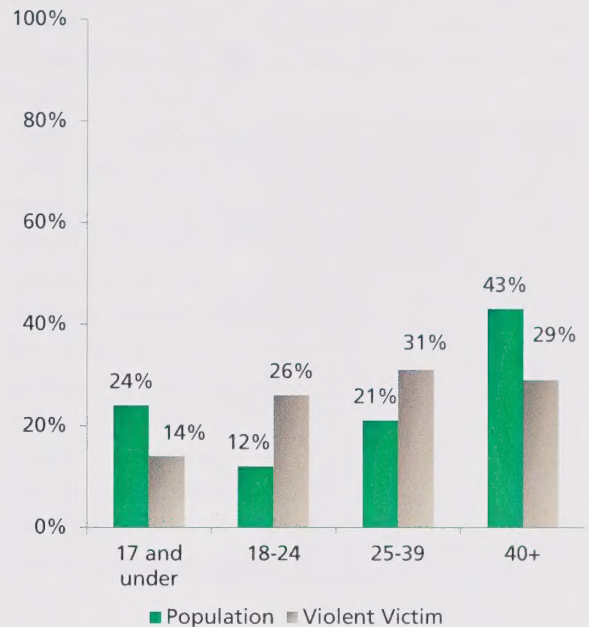
Age

As with ethnicity, there were differences in victimization by age, with young adults comprising a larger proportion of victims compared to their representation in the population. According to 2011 estimates, 24 percent of the region's population was 17 years of age and younger, 12 percent between 18 and 24, 21 percent between 25 and 39, and 43 percent 40 and older. While individuals ages 25 to 39 accounted for the largest percentage of violent crime victims (31%), those 18 to 24 years old were over twice as likely to be victims of a violent crime (26%) compared to their proportion in the population (12%). Individuals 17 years of age and younger (14% of victims and 24% of population) and 40 years of age and older (29% versus 43%) were underrepresented as violent crime victims (Figure 2).

However, these proportions also varied by crime type. Specifically, over half (54%) of rape victims were under the age of 25, compared to only 36 percent of the population being in that age category. It is important to note that these victims are all females because males are not included in rape victim statistics, emphasizing the value of rape awareness among girls and young women.² Youth 18 to 24 years old were twice as likely to be a victim of assault (24%) in comparison to their representation in the population (12%). In addition, older individuals (40 and over) were underrepresented in all crime types, except homicide (43%) (Figure 2 and Table 2).

² In January 2012 the FBI agreed to use an expanded definition of rape in the Uniform Crime Report as follows: "The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person without the consent of the victim." Previously, Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) standards for the crime of rape required that all victims were female and all suspects were male. The 2014 version of this bulletin will reflect the change in the rape definition.

Figure 2
ADULTS 18 TO 24 OVERREPRESENTED AS VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: Automated Regional Justice Information System, 2011; San Diego County Sheriff and cities law enforcement agencies, 2011; SANDAG, 2011.

Table 2
TYPE OF VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION VARIED BY AGE

	Homicide	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault
17 and under	16%	21%	16%	13%
18 to 24	16%	33%	29%	24%
25 to 39	25%	31%	29%	32%
40 and older	43%	15%	26%	32%

NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Automated Regional Justice Information System, 2011; San Diego County Sheriff and cities law enforcement agencies, 2011.

Gender

In 2011, half (50%) of the region's population was male and half (50%) was female. Overall, there were differences between these proportions and the percent of those who were

According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, the greatest disparity between violent crimes committed against males and females were those committed by intimate partners, which accounted for 3% of violent crimes against males and 23% against females.⁴

violent crime victims (39% female and 61% male) (not shown). There also was variation between gender and the types of crime of which males and females were more likely to be victims.

Specifically, males were overrepresented

as victims of homicide (61%), robbery (67%), and aggravated assault (64%) in comparison to their representation in the population and females, by legal definition, represented all of the rapes in the county (Table 3).

WHAT WERE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS IN 2011?

Because both the tragedy associated with the loss of a human life and the fact that homicide is one of the most reliable measures of violent crimes,³ more detailed information is provided on the 82 individuals who died in 2011 as a result of criminal homicide. Crime rates in 2011 reflected a 30-year low in San Diego County, with the exception of a 22 percent increase in homicides from 2010 when there were 67 homicides (not shown). Understanding the precipitating event (i.e., motive) contributing to

FAMILY VIOLENCE* AS HOMICIDE MOTIVE MORE PREVALENT IN 2011 THAN PAST FOUR YEARS

The increase in homicides between 2010 (67) and 2011 (82) was due in part to a rise in the number involving family members. The following are key findings from homicide data over the past four years:

- Domestic violence accounted for 31 percent of homicides in 2011, the highest proportion in the past four years (18% in 2010, 24% in 2009, and 16% in 2008).
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of domestic violence homicides in 2011 involved a firearm.
- Although actual numbers are relatively small, homicides precipitated by child abuse have risen each year from 2008 (1 victim) to 2011 (5 victims).
- Incidents of homicides involving multiple victims within a family increased from one such incident in 2010 to six in 2011.
- Of the 25 females (adults and children) murdered in 2011, 23 (92%) were killed at the hands of a family member or intimate partner, the highest proportion over the past four years (50% in 2008, 58% in 2009, and 72% in 2010).

These findings iterate the need for effective interventions with at-risk families to prevent violence that may be occurring in the home from escalating to lethal proportions.

³ Fox, A., & Zawitz, M. (2007). Homicide Trends in the United States. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>.

⁴ Truman, J. L. (2011). "Criminal Victimization, 2010." National Crime Victimization Survey. Washington, D.C. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

* Family violence includes child abuse and domestic violence.

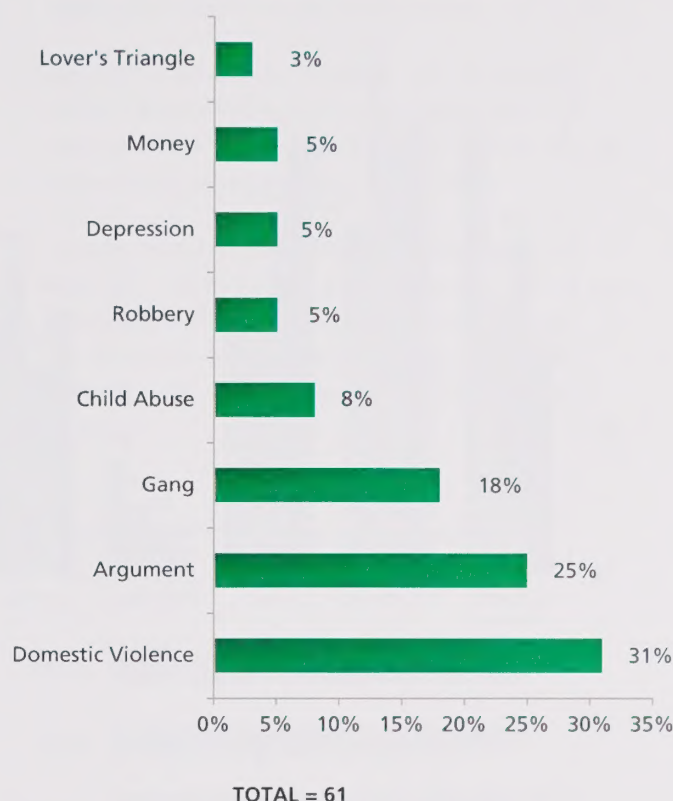
the homicide sheds light on where to target prevention and enforcement efforts.

Beginning in 2008, homicide motive data were obtained for this bulletin directly from each of the jurisdictions, rather than from the California Department of Justice, in an effort to obtain the most complete data. Over the years, homicide motives have varied; but because of the change in the data collection process that occurred in 2008, as well as the number of "unknown" motives, it is difficult to compare data prior to 2008.

Homicide Motive

In 2011, almost one in three (31%) homicides were related to domestic violence, one-quarter (25%) to arguments, 18 percent to gang activity, 8 percent to child abuse, 5 percent each to robbery, depression, or financial reasons, and 3 percent to a lover's triangle (Figure 3). Figure 4 shows the change in types of motive over the past four years, and particularly the increase in the proportion of domestic violence-related homicides, which rose from 18 percent in 2010 to 31 percent in 2011. The proportion of homicides attributed to gang activity was highest in 2008 (31%) and declined in both 2009 (26%) and 2010 (18%), the same rate as in 2011 (18%).

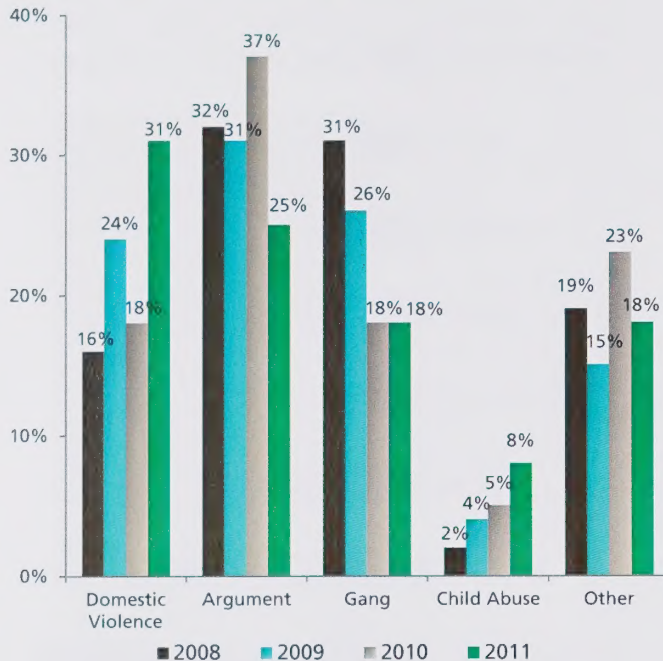
Figure 3
NEARLY 1 IN 3 HOMICIDES IN 2011 WERE RELATED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: San Diego County Sheriff and cities law enforcement agencies, 2011.

Figure 4
HOMICIDE MOTIVES VARIED OVER PAST FIVE YEARS



TOTAL = 54 – 81

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: San Diego County Sheriff and cities law enforcement agencies, 2008 – 2011.

The leveling off of gang-related homicides between 2010 and 2011 reflects, at least in part, the results from targeted and coordinated efforts by law enforcement to direct attention on known violent offenders with the goal of preventing retaliatory violence whenever possible.

Of the 75 homicides for which type of weapon was known, firearms were used in over half (56%) of murders occurring in 2011, followed by personal weapons (hands, feet) (20%), knives or other sharp objects (19%), blunt objects (3%), or drowning and gasoline (1% each) (not shown).

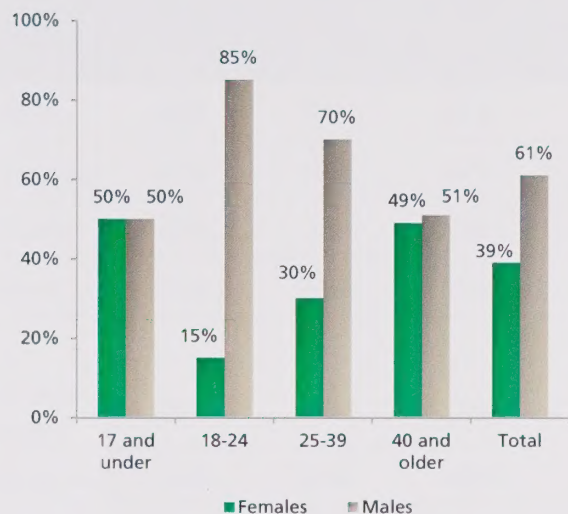
Age and Gender

Closer examination of all homicide victims in 2011 provides insight into victim characteristics. In 2011, 61 percent of homicide victims were male and 39 percent were female (Table 3). Of the 80 homicides in 2011 for which victim age and gender were known, around half (49%) of female victims were 40 or over, while victims between ages 18 and 24 were more likely to be male (85%) (Figure 5). Of the 59 homicides in

In 2011, female homicide victims were more likely to be older and victims of a domestic violence incident. Male homicide victims were younger and more likely a victim of an argument or gang-related homicide.

2011 for which gender and motive were known, females were more likely to be victims of homicide as a result of domestic violence (95%), while males represented all (100%) homicide victims precipitated by an argument, gang activity, or robbery. With regard to age, over three-fifths (82%) of homicide victims that resulted from gang activity were between 18 and 39 years old, while more than half (53%) of homicide victims resulting from an argument were 40 and older (not shown).

Figure 5
HOMICIDE VICTIMS MORE LIKELY TO BE
MALES 18 TO 39 YEARS OLD



TOTAL = 80

NOTE: Cases with missing information are not included. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Automated Regional Justice Information System, 2011; San Diego County Sheriff and cities law enforcement agencies, 2011.

Age and Ethnicity

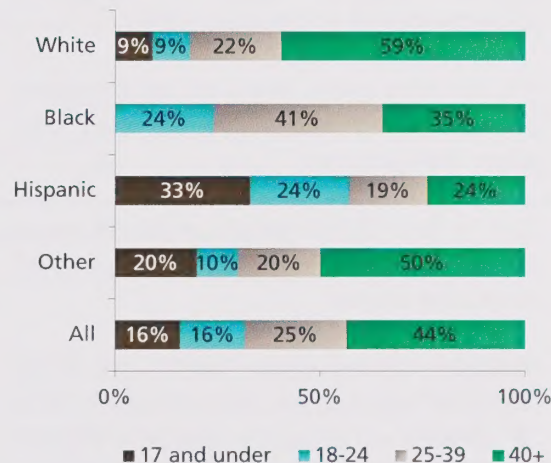
In addition to age and gender, there were differences among homicide victims with regard to age and ethnicity. As shown in Figure 6, more than half (59%) of White homicide victims were 40 and older, while one-third (33%) of Hispanic homicide victims were 17 and under.

Other findings worth noting are based on the 61 homicides for which motive could be determined:

- Over two-thirds (67%) of Black homicide victims involved a gang-related incident, compared to 0 percent to 19 percent for homicide victims of all other races;

- Whites were most often homicide victims stemming from an argument (42%), compared to 0 percent to 25 percent for homicide victims of all other races;
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of domestic violence homicide victims were 40 years of age or older, compared to 0 percent to 21 percent of other age groups; and
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of individuals of "other" ethnicities were victims of a domestic violence homicide, compared to 19 percent to 33 percent for homicide victims of all other ethnicities (not shown).

Figure 6
Homicide Victims Varied by Age and
Ethnicity



TOTAL = 80

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Automated Regional Justice Information System, 2011; San Diego County Sheriff and cities law enforcement agencies, 2011.

WHAT WERE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF VICTIMS AND SUSPECTS FOR EACH OF THE CRIME TYPES?

Unlike victim data, which is based on crime incident reports, suspect information is gathered from arrest data. Thus, the suspect information could be from a crime committed in a previous year. As with victimization, the pattern of suspect characteristics (i.e., ethnicity, age, and gender) typically varies across crime type. These data, along with all victimization characteristics, are provided in more detail in Table 3. Analyses of violent crime suspect data revealed several noticeable differences:

- More than half (54%) of homicide suspects were Hispanic, and the most common age group of all homicide suspects was 18 to 24 years (38%).
- Whites were more likely to be a suspect of aggravated assault (40%) than any other violent crime.
- One in four (25%) youth under 18 years old were robbery suspects, the highest of all violent crimes.
- Females represented over one-third (36%) of aggravated assault victims, but 27 percent of assault suspects, a higher proportion than any other violent crime.
- With the exception of rape, males were more likely than females to be a victim and suspect of violent crime.
- Rape victims were younger than rape suspects. Specifically, over one in five (21%) rape victims were under the age of 18, but 41 percent of rape suspects (all males) were 25 to 39 years old.

Table 3
CHARACTERISTICS OF VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS AND SUSPECTS VARIED BY TYPE OF CRIME

	HOMICIDE		RAPE		ROBBERY		AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	
	Victims	Suspects	Victims	Suspects	Victims	Suspects	Victims	Suspects
White	40%	23%	53%	26%	37%	24%	43%	40%
Hispanic	27%	54%	30%	40%	39%	37%	33%	36%
Other	12%	3%	6%	13%	13%	5%	9%	7%
Black	21%	20%	11%	21%	12%	34%	15%	18%
17 and under	16%	8%	21%	8%	16%	25%	13%	10%
18 to 24	16%	38%	33%	30%	29%	42%	24%	23%
25 to 39	25%	29%	31%	41%	29%	23%	32%	39%
40+	43%	25%	15%	22%	26%	10%	32%	28%
Male	61%	86%	N/A	100%	67%	84%	64%	73%
Female	39%	14%	100%	N/A	33%	16%	36%	27%

NOTE: Cases with missing information are not included. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Automated Regional Justice Information System; San Diego County Sheriff and cities law enforcement agencies, 2011.

SUMMARY

Understanding who is at greatest risk for being a victim or suspect of violent crime provides a fuller picture of how crime impacts the San Diego region. Crime rates in 2011 reflected a 30-year low in San Diego County, with the exception of a 22 percent increase in homicides from 2010 when there were 67 homicides. While San Diego County is still experiencing relatively low violent crime rates, perceptions are changing about whether crime might be on the rise.

Overall, data regarding 2011 violent crime victims and suspects in San Diego County indicate similar trends as in previous years, with young adult males, especially Black

males, at greatest risk for victimization as evidenced by the fact that Blacks were overrepresented in every violent crime category in comparison to their proportion in the population. In addition to race/ethnicity, age also was a predictor of victimization, with the risk of becoming a violent crime victim decreasing with age, with one noted exception being that Whites ages 40 and older were overrepresented as homicide victims in comparison to other ages and ethnicities.

With regard to homicide, females were more likely to be murdered in the San Diego region as a result of domestic violence, while males were more often a homicide victim due to an

argument, robbery, or gang-related incident. Overall, domestic violence accounted for the largest proportion of homicides in 2011, followed by arguments and gang activity. An increase in homicides involving family members as both victims and suspects warrants greater attention focused on at-risk families by providing effective and timely intervention and prevention services to stop family violence before it escalates to lethal levels.

Suspect data also highlights the need for continued early interventions as young individuals (under 18 years old) were found to be committing serious violent crimes, especially robberies.

METHODOLOGY

The numbers presented in this report were mainly derived from the Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS), with the exception of homicide motive which was gathered directly from local law enforcement agencies. A few qualifying statements should be considered when interpreting this information.

Information regarding crime victim characteristics was available from incident reports that were completed when a crime was reported to law enforcement. However, not all crimes are reported to law enforcement and some sectors of the population may be more likely than others to report crime to law enforcement.⁴

Information regarding crime suspect characteristics was available from arrest reports. Obviously, descriptives from individuals who committed a crime but were not arrested are not included; and it is possible that some individuals in the suspect sample did not commit the crime for which they were arrested.

Because of changes in the California Department of Justice's reporting system, data on homicide motives was gathered from local jurisdictions. The number of victims reported in this bulletin varies from the number of crimes reported in other publications because of missing information for some crimes, the inclusion of simple assault, and the inclusion of some crimes later determined to be unfounded.

